

Japanese Language Insights

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なるほど、日本語

Zen Loy
Harumi Willow

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*Zen Loy
Harumi Willow*

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Published by

Soroban Pty Ltd

P.O. Box 196, Cammeray

Sydney, NSW 2062

Australia

(zen@netbox.com)

National Library of Australia CIP entry:

Loy, Zen.

Japanese language insights = Naruhodo nihongo.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 646 28530 0.

I. Japanese language. 2. Japan - Civilization. I. Willow,
Harumi. II. Title. III. Title: Naruhodo nihongo.

952

Acknowledgements

Thanks to C. McConnochie for reviewing an earlier version of this book.

The calligraphy for the *iroha* poem on page 62 was presented to ZL by

Ms. A. Hasegawa.

All other images in this book are from JapanClips, a collection of clipart
from Matsuri Graphics, P.O. Box 6926, Bloomington IN 47407, USA

(matsuri@intersource.com).

Printed in Australia by

FAST BOOKS

16 Darghan Street

Glebe NSW 2037

Australia.

To my wife, Soo Heng,
for all the joyful times shared together
and those still to come.

—ZL

Preface

Welcome to *Japanese Language Insights*. This book is written as a complement to classroom study. It does not dwell on grammatical points or other such topics that you will find in most textbooks on the Japanese language. Rather this book discusses things related to the language that has a bearing on Japanese life and culture.

Some interesting aspects of the Japanese language are examined in this book. For example we start with a look at the words for *I* and *you* and how these are used. We then look at *greetings* and *expressions* and the situations when they are used. After a discussion of *hira* and *kata kana* we are ready to appreciate the *i-ro-ha* poem. Among other topics, *onomatopoeia* and *tongue twisters* are presented.

Our aim in this book is to provide an insight into the Japanese language, and through this to provide a glimpse into the fascinating Japanese culture.

By providing this window into a fascinating part of the Japanese language we hope that you will be spurred onwards in your Japanese studies, for many wonders await you along the way.

Gambaite ne! がんばってね。Keep at it!

Contents

Introduction	3
1. I (watakushi)	7
2. You (anata)	12
3. Greetings (aisatsu)	16
4. What, Why, When., (Nani..)	21
5. Counting (kazoekata)	28
6. Expressions (hyogen)	34
7. Quarrelsome Words (kenkago)	40
8. Four Letter Words (warui kotoba)	44
9. Kana	46
10. Borrowed Words (gairaigo)	52
11. Office Speak (ofisu no gairaigo)	57
12. I-ro-ha	60
13. Kanji	63
14. Onomatopoeia (giseigo, gitaigo)	68
15. Games (geemu)	73
16. Tongue Twisters (hayakuchi kotoba)	77
17. Modesty (kenson)	80
Index	85

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Introduction

One of the authors (ZL) started studying the Japanese language as a hobby over twenty years ago. The very first trip to Japan proved to be very fascinating, having been immersed in both Japanese sounds and written words. This fascination has continued to this day and over subsequent visits to Japan, ZL has been noting down many of the observations that have gone to make up this book, a collaboration with his current *sensei*, HW.

One of the first things the student of Japanese realizes on a trip to Japan is that the spoken language is far from the text book Japanese. The Japanese call their language *kokugo* (国語), the *national language*, while the language as taught to foreigners is *nihongo*, the *Japanese Language*. The *nihongo* as taught is usually not quite the language as she is spoke and used in Japan.

This book provides insights into the Japanese language that is both interesting and fascinating. It provides a behind the scenes explanation for the language usage. It is intended for people studying the language (beginners to intermediate) as well as people with an interest in things Japanese.

The book takes the reader beyond the standard classroom text. Examples are given in *romaji*, for the beginner, and in *kana* (かな) and *kanji* (漢字), which will benefit the reader who wants to practice reading.

We hope you will find this book interesting and enjoyable as you discover another facet to the Japanese language.

Following is a summary of the topics covered in the seventeen chapters of this book.

Chapter 1. I (watakushi):

The word for *I* in Japanese and its usage in conversations and in reference to oneself. The various words to mean *I*. The use of *I* should be avoided.

Chapter 2. You (anata):

The word for *you* in Japanese and its usage in conversations. The use of *you* should be avoided. Other words for *you*.

Chapter 3. Greetings (aisatsu):

How to use greetings on meeting. *Sayonara* and expressions for parting. Expressions for parting between office colleagues. Exchanges for parting and returning in the home.

Chapter 4. What, Why, When.. (Nani..):

The interrogative words: What, Why, When, How, Where and Who in Japanese (*Nani, Naze, Itsu, Doo, Doko* and *Dare*). Discussions on their use with examples. Addition of *ka*. Addition of *mo*.

Chapter 5. Counting (kazoekata):

Two ways to count in Japanese. The Japanese numbers and special forms. Different counters for different types of objects. The unlucky numbers 4 and 9. Counting units. Fun in puns with numbers.

Chapter 6. Expressions (hyoogen):

Interesting expressions, exclamations, phrases and buzz-words. Some exclamations of surprise. Other words to

express one's opinion or impressions. Words to gain attention. Expressions used when visiting. The useful word *doomo*.

Chapter 7. Quarrelsome Words (kenkago):

Words that will start a fight or help win one. Masculine and feminine forms and examples. Words to patch up and be friends again.

Chapter 8. Four Letter Words (warui kotoba):

Some four-letter words. Other words that one may chance to hear. A word of caution.

Chapter 9. Kana:

The Japanese syllables - *hiragana* and *katakana*. The table of fifty sounds. Euphonic changes and symbols. The importance of the *a-ka-sa-* sequence. The five levels of *a-i-u-e-o*. The inflections of verbs at the various levels with examples.

Chapter 10. Borrowed Words (gairaigo):

Foreign words that have been incorporated into the Japanese language. A selection of words related to food. Some borrowed words used to create new concepts. Other words that refer to the home. Words related to entertainment. A further list of interesting borrowed words.

Chapter 11. Office Speak (ofisu no gairaigo):

A look at borrowed words that refer to the office environment. Some words that relate to office and work.

Chapter 12. I-ro-ha:

The challenge with the 48 kana syllables. The *iroha* poem.

Chapter 13. Kanji:

The Chinese characters that have been adopted in written Japanese. *On*- and *kun*-readings. Usage of *kana* and *kanji*. The structure of *kanji*. How to look up a *kanji* in a Japanese dictionary. The formation of some *kanji*.

Chapter 14. Onomatopoeia (*giseigo*, *gitaigo*):

Japanese words that describe sound and quality. The sounds that animals make. Some onomatopoeic words to describe frequency or manner of doing things. Words for describing how one feels. Words for weather conditions.

Chapter 15. Games (*geemu*):

A look at the language of board and table games. The Japanese card game of *Hanafuda*. Another card game - *irohagaruta*. The game of *maajan*. The popular board game of *Go*. *Jankenpon* to decide who wins.

Chapter 16. Tongue Twisters (*hayakuchi kotoba*):

Fun with some tongue twisters. 'There are two chickens in the garden' and others to practise rapid speech skills with.

Chapter 17. Modesty (*kenson*):

One of the distinctive Japanese traits is modesty. Examples of situations. Modesty is a virtue. Examples of conversations.

Chapter 1

I watakushi 私

The word *I* (watakushi 私), referring to oneself, is probably the most abused and wrongly taught word in some Japanese language books. We get sentences like:

Watakushi wa Sumisu desu.

私はスミスです。

I am Smith.

Watakushi wa eiga ga suki desu.

私は映画が大好きです。

I like movies.

In normal conversations the reference to oneself is usually clear from the participants of the conversation and with humbleness in mind the use of *I* (watakushi 私) to emphasize oneself is avoided. Hence the above sentences will be stated as:

Sumisu desu.
スミスです。
Smith..

Eiga ga suki desu.
映画が好きです。
[I] like movies.

In Japanese, we normally defer to the listener and hence the speaker normally adopts a more humble position. To express politeness, we may introduce ourselves with the statement.

Sumisu to mooshimasu.
スミスと申します。
[I m] called 'Smith'.

An example conversation may go as follows.

S: Hajimemashite. Sumisu to mooshimasu.
はじめまして。スミスと申します。
How do you do. I'm called Smith

T: Hajimemashite. Tanaka desu. Doozo yoroshiku.
はじめまして。田中です。どうぞよろしく。
How do you do. Tanaka. Pleased to meet you.

S: O-shigoto wa?
お仕事は。
What is [your] work?

T: Komyuutaa puroguramaa desu. Sumisu-san wa?
コンピュータープログラマーです。
スミスさんは。
I'm a computer programmer. And you?

S: Daigakusei desu.
大学生です。
I'm a university student.

No where in the above conversation has *watakushi* been used. There may be occasions when it is natural to use *watakushi*. For example, some friends may be ordering drinks:

A. Kokakooro o-negaishimasu.
コカコーラお願いします。
Coca Cola please

B. Koohi desu.
コーヒーです。
Coffee

C: Watakushi wa remontu desu.
私はレモンティーです。
Lemon tea for me.

There is an emphasis that C's order is different and the statement can be interpreted as: "As for me, it's lemon tea". Remontu is hot tea served with a slice of lemon. Tea served with milk is miruku-tee.

In summary, *I* is used only sparingly, at the beginning to introduce oneself as the subject or to emphasize oneself. Interestingly, while *I* is not often used, there are many words that mean 'I' in Japanese. The polite *watakushi* is commonly mentioned. *Watakushi* is often abbreviated to *watashi* at the colloquial level. *Atashi* is a feminine form at the colloquial level.

The geisha and women of the pleasure quarters of old used to refer to themselves as *achiki*. Geisha are persons who are accomplished in performing and entertainment arts. These

accomplishments include mastering the *shamisen* (a Japanese stringed instrument akin to the banjo), Japanese dance and traditional songs.



Geisha: person accomplished in the arts such as the *shamisen*, Japanese dance and traditional songs

The masculine equivalent to *atashi* is *boku*. In the example above where friends are involved a more common colloquial statement for C would be "boku wa remontu da"

Another word for I is *ore* 俺. This is another masculine word at the colloquial level and appears frequently in songs.

Yet another word for I is *wagahai*. *Wagahai* is used by a person in an exalted position such as a Shogun or Emperor. It is the royal I, so to speak. A famous classic novel from 1905 by Soseki Natsume is titled 'Wagahai wa neko de aru' (I am a cat). The story is told from the perspective of the family cat. While the title is translated as 'I am a cat', this cannot capture the cultural content of the Japanese title for the use of *wagahai* by

the cat gives the impression that the cat is lord of all that it surveys.

To distinguish the singular I from the plural 'we', the ending *-tachi* may be added giving *watakushi-tachi* and *boku-tachi*

Ware is a more formal word for I. The plural form for *ware* is *wareware*. This plural form *wareware* (we) may be heard at office meetings to refer to one's group.

In addition to not using I, references to 'my family' and 'my company' also do not use the construction 'watakushi no kazoku' and 'watakushi no kaisha'. Rather, references to one's family or home uses the word *uchi* and to one's company with *uchi no kaisha* or *wagasha*; as in.

Uchi no kodomo wa iu koto o kikanai.
うちの子供は言う事を聞かない。
My children don't listen to me. (are naughty)

The avoidance of *watakushi* is also apparent in telephone calls. To state who you are or in answer to such a question, *kochira* is used, as in

Kochira wa Tanaka desu.
こちらは田中です。
This [side] is Tanaka.

In conclusion, drop the 'watakushi wa' part of your statements and you will sound much more natural in Japanese.

Chapter 2

You anata あなた

As to be expected, *you (anata)*, like the word *I (watakushi)* is also not used often. The nuances for *I* have been discussed in chapter 1. We now take a look at the aspects of *you (anata)*.

In conversations, it would be impo:ite to refer to the listener with the word *anata*. The word is dropped and not used with reference to the listener made another way. Part of the example conversation between Ms Smith and Mr Tanaka given in chapter 1 is repeated here:

S: O-shigoto wa?
お仕事は?
What is [your] work?

T: Kompyuutaa puroguramaa desu. Sumisu-san wa?
コンピュータープログラマーです。
スミスさんは。
I'm a computer programmer. And you?

S: Daigakusei desu.
大学生です。
I'm a university student.

Instead of asking '*anata no shigoto wa nan desu ka*' (what is your work?), Ms Smith asks '*o-shigoto wa [nan desu ka]*'. The honorific '*o*' before '*shigoto*' makes it clear that it is Mr Tanaka's work that is the subject of the question. Ever humble, we do not apply the honorific '*o*' to ourselves.

When Mr Tanaka answers the question and then asks '*Sumisu-san wa?*' the use of *anata wa* is avoided by using the person's name. This method of using the person's name, role or title in place of *anata* is very common:

O-toosan wa ikimasu ka.
おとうさんは行きますか。
[Father,] are you going?

Kachoo wa irasshaimasu ka.
課長はいらっしゃいますか。
[Boss,] are you going?

Sensei wa irasshaimasu ka.
先生はいらっしゃいますか。
[Teacher,] are you going?

In the last two sentences above, the more polite verb *irasshaimasu* is used instead of *ikimasu*.

The word *anata* is used between lovers and by a wife to address her husband. In these instances *anata* evokes a sense of intimacy:

Anata wa doo.

あなたはどうぞ。

How are you feeling, dear?

Anata in this instance may be abbreviated to *anta*. In relation to this use of anata, the words for she (*kanajo*) and he (*kare*), have also taken on intimate connotations. *Kanajo* may be used to refer to one's girl friend and *kare* to one's boy friend or lover.

In this regard words may not need to be used. By having only the little finger sticking out with all other fingers closed indicates girl friend and thumb for boy friend. Thus an office worker may be answering a telephone call and telling a colleague that the call is for her. By having his thumb up, he is indicating that the colleague's boy friend is on the line.

As with *watakushi* (I), while anata (you) is not often used, there are again many words that mean 'you' in Japanese.

The opposite of *boku* is the masculine use of *kimi* (you) which is a word at the non-polite level. For example, among some friends at a snack bar, one male might ask another:

A: *Kimi, nan ni suru?*

きみ、何にする？

What will you have?

B: *Boku wa, sandoichi to koohi..*

ぼくはサンドイッチとコーヒー。

For me, sandwiches and coffee.

O-mae may be used to address the listener. This word started at the polite level but now has changed to take on an abrupt

connotation. However when a husband addresses his wife with *o-mae*, he means 'darling'.

With the Western influence, a girl may address her boyfriend with *daarin* (ダーリン), the Japanese rendition of 'darling'.

Another less frequently used word for you is *kisama*.

To distinguish between the singular 'you' from the plural 'you [all]' the ending *-tachi* may be added giving *anata-tachi*. A more polite form is *anata-gata*.

While *uchi* is used to refer to one's family or home, the equivalent for 'your family' is *o-taku* or more politely *o-taku-sama*, where the honorific 'o' has been prefixed to *taku* (home).

O-taku wa dochira desu ka.

お宅はどちらですか。

Where do you live? (lit. Where is our house?)

To avoid the use of *anata* in telephone conversations we would use *sachira*.

Sochira wa donata desu ka?

そちらはどなたですか。

Who is speaking? (lit. who is it on that side?)

Again, as with *watakushi*, drop the '*anata wa*' part of your statements and you will sound much more natural in Japanese.

Chapter 3

Greetings
aisatsu
挨拶

A: Anata wa o-genki desu ka.
あなたは元気ですか。

B: Watakushi wa genki desu.
私は元気です。

The above represents a greeting on meeting a friend as typically taught in books. This conversation is rarely used and unfortunately is wrong on many counts. Firstly as we have discussed in chapters 1 and 2 both *anata* and *watakushi* should normally not be included in the statements.

However the use of *genki* is also generally not appropriate. *Genki* carries with it the meaning of vitality, high spirits, strength and health. So when we say:

Ano kodomo wa genki nee.
あのこどもは元気ねえ。

we mean that 'that kid is sprightly' To ask if someone is *genki* is really to ask after that person's health. This could be the case if we are meeting a person after that person has been ill, or we are meeting that person after a long time. In these cases either of the following questions may be appropriate:

A: O-genki deshita ka.
お元気でしたか。
How have you been?

A: O-genki soo desu nee.
お元気そうですねえ。
You seem to be well.

An appropriate reply to the above questions is:

B: O-kage sama de.
おかげさまで。
I'm fine, thank you. (*lit.* by your good graces, [I'm well])

For a normal greeting on meeting the following may be used:

O-hayoo.
おはよう。
Morning.

O-hayoo gozaimasu. (more polite)
おはようございます。
Good morning.

Konnichi wa.
今日は。
Good day.

It is also quite usual to comment on the weather.

A: O-hayoo gozaimasu.

おはようございます。

Good morning.

B: O-hayoo. It o-tenki desu nee.

おはよう。いいお天気ですねえ。

Morning. Beautiful day isn't it?

We must also exercise caution on parting. *Sayonara* as commonly taught may not be appropriate. This word has the connotation that the parting is likely to be a long one. In this sense it is more akin to the French *adieu*. So when we bid a friend *sayonara* that person may wonder why we are not expecting to see that person again for a long while.

A parting between friends may go as follows

A: Sore jaa.

それじゃあ。

Well, till then.

B: Jaa mata.

じゃあまた。

See you again.

Other expressions are:

Jaa nee.

じゃあねえ。

See you.

Jaa mata ashita.

じゃあまたあした。

See you again tomorrow.

O-yasumi nasai

お休みなさい。

Good night.

Some more polite expressions to take one's leave are:

Dewa, sorosoro..

では、そろそろ。

I'll have to be going soon..

Dewa, shitsurei shimasu

では、失礼します。

I'll take my leave. (*lit.* I'll be rude [and leave])

Between office colleagues, a different parting may be used. At the end of day in the office the following parting may be exchanged between Ms Smith, who is leaving first, and Mr Tanaka.

S: O-saku ni

お先に。

I'm leaving first (before you)..

T: O-tsukaresama deshita.

おつかれさまでした。

Bye (*lit.* you must be tired..)

Other expressions for parting may be used to wish someone well:

Ki o-tsukete!

気をつけて!

Take care (e.g. be careful in driving).

O-genki de!
お元気で!
Good health (good luck).

At home, the following exchange is quite usual between the person leaving and the person remaining at home:

A: Itte maimasu.
いってまいります。
I'm leaving (and will return).

B: Itte rasshai.
いってらっしゃい。
Please do so (go and return).

On returning home, the following exchange is spoken between the person returning and the person at home:

A: Tadaima.
ただいま。
(Just now) I'm home.

B: O-kaerinasai.
お帰りなさい。
Welcome back.

Chapter 4

What, Why, When..

nani..

なに..

In *The Elephant's Child* of his *Just So Stories*, Rudyard Kipling wrote about six honest serving men that taught him all he knew. The names of these men were:

What, Why, When, How, Where and Who.

We can do no better than to enlist the assistance of the Japanese cousins of these serving men - our interrogative words

Nani, Naze, Itsu, Doo, Doko and Dare.

Nani (なに、何) or in its clipped form *nan* (なん、何) is the interrogative word for *what*. Every student of the Japanese language would have come across *nan* (なん) in questions of the sort:

Kore wa nan desu ka.
これはなんですか。

What is this?

Nani spoken softly is a response that requests further information:

Nani..

なに

What (is it)..?

Spoken with a short harsh voice, it indicates irritation. When *nan* or *nani* is combined with a counter it forms a question about the number of the object.

Nan gatsu desu ka.

何月ですか。

What month is it?

Nan nin desu ka.

何人ですか。

How many people?

Naze (なぜ) asks *why*. When *naze* is used to precede a statement, it changes the statement to one of a question of the reason for the statement.

Kodomo ga naite imasu.

子供が泣いています。

The child is crying.

Naze kodomo ga naite imasu ka.

なぜ子供が泣いていますか。

Why is the child crying?

A more common way to ask for the reason is *dooshite* (どうして) which can be translated as *why* or *how come*

Dooshite kodomo ga naite imasu ka.

どうして子供が泣いていますか。

How come (why) the child is crying?

Itsu (いつ) asks *when*.

Itsu kikoeru shimasu ka.

いつ帰国しますか。

When will you be returning for your home country?

Doo (どう) asks *how*.

Doo desu ka.

どうですか。

How is it?

Doo shimasu ka.

どうしますか。

How should I do it?

In the above sentences, *doo* can be replaced by the equivalent interrogative word *ikaga* (いかが)

To ask for the price of an item, *ikura* (いくら) is used

Mado ni iru ko-inu wa ikura desu ka.

窓にいる小犬はいくらですか。

How much is that doggy in the window?

Doko (どこ) is used for questions related to place.

Doko de kaimashita ka.

どこで買いましたか。

Where did you buy it?

A variant of *doko* is *dochira*, meaning *in which direction*.
On leaving one's house, it is quite common to be accosted by a neighbor with the question:

Dochira e ikimasu ka.
どちらへ行きますか？
Where (which way) are you going?

Two standard evasive replies to this are:

Chotto dekakemasu
ちょっと出かけます。
I'm going out.

Chotto (soko made).
ちょっと(そこまで)。
Out (to there).

Dare (だれ) can be used to ask about a person:

Ano hito wa dare desu ka.
あの人はだれですか。
Who is that person?

A more polite form for *dare* is *donata* (どなた). The above question can be asked even more politely as follows, with *hito* being replaced by the more polite *donata*: *ka*

Ano kata wa donata desu ka.
あの方はどなたですか。
Who is that person?

When *ka* is added to these interrogative words, the words take on an indefinite meaning:

Nani ka	なにか	Something
---------	-----	-----------

Naze ka	なぜか	Somehow
Itsu ka	いつか	Sometime
Doo ka	どうか	Somehow
Doko ka	どこか	Somewhere
Dare ka	だれか	Someone

Examples of usage are:

Nani ka nomimono o kudasai.
なにか飲み物をください。
Please give me something to drink.

Naze ka (naze da ka) kanashiku narimashita.
なぜか(なぜだか)悲しくなりました。
Somehow (I don't know why), I became sad.

Itsu ka nihon ni ikitai desu.
いつか日本に行きたいです。
I would like to go to Japan sometime (some day).

Doo ka shimashita ka.
どうかしましたか。
What has happened (somehow) to you?

Doko ka shizuka na tokoro e ikimasen ka.
どこか静かなところへ行きますか。
Shall we go to somewhere that's quiet?

Dare ka tasukete.
だれか助けて。
He/p me, somebody!

Dare ka kara denwa ga arimashita.
だれかから電話がありました。
There was a phone call from someone

When *mo* (も) is added to most of these interrogative words, the meaning changes based on the following verb. With a positive verb, a meaning of *every* is conveyed. With a negative verb, a meaning of *not/none/never* is conveyed. *Mo* does not combine with interrogative words in all cases. The more usual combinations are shown in the following table.

Interrogative Word + <i>mo</i>	+ positive verb	+ negative verb
Nani mo なんにも	-	Nothing (anything)
Itsu mo いつも	Every time (always)	No time (never)
Doo mo どうも	-	Not at all
Doko mo どこも	Everywhere	Nowhere (anywhere)
Dare mo だれも	Everyone	No one (nobody)

Note that the combination *naze mo* is not used

Examples of usage of interrogative words with *mo* are:

Kesa nani mo tabemasen deshita.
今朝なんにも食べませんでした。
I did not eat anything this morning

Itsu mo chooshoku ni toosuto o tabemasu.
いつも朝食にトーストを食べます。
I always have toast for breakfast.

Itsu mo chooshoku wa tabemasen.
いつも朝食は食べません。
I never have breakfast.
Doo mo wakarimasen.
どうも分かりません。
I cannot understand this at all.

Doko mo hito ga oozei imashita.
どこも人が大勢いました。
There were lots of people everywhere.

Kinoo wa doko ni mo ikimasen deshita.
きのうはどこにも行きませんでした。
I did not go anywhere yesterday.

Dare de mo miru koto ga dekimasu.
だれでも見ることができます。
Everyone can see it.

Dare mo miru koto ga dekimasen.
だれも見ることができません。
Nobody can see it.

Chapter 5

Counting kazoekata 数え方

There are two ways to count in Japanese. One way comes originally from the Japanese and the other from Chinese.

1	hitotsu ひとつ	ichi いち
2	futatsu ふたつ	ni に
3	mitsu みっつ	san さん
4	yottsu よっつ	shi, yon し、よん
5	itsutsu いつつ	go ご
6	mutsu むっつ	roku ろく
7	nanatsu ななつ	shichi, nana しち、なな
8	yattsu やっつ	hachi はち
9	kokonotsu このつ	kyuu, ku きゅう、く

10	too とお	juu じゅう
11		juu-ichi じゅういち
12		juu-ni じゅうに

The Japanese numbers, hitotsu to, only go from 1 to 10. After 10, counting continues with the other form, juu-ichi...etc, usually with an exception for 20.

The days of the month are counted as follows, with exceptions for the 1st, 14th and 20th days of the month:

Tsuitachi, futsuka, mikka, yokka, itsuka, muika, nanoka, yooka, kokonoka, tooka,
juu-ichi-nichi, juu-ni-nichi, juu-yokka..., juu-ku-nichi, hatsuka,
ru-juu-ichi-nichi, san-juu-ichi-nichi.

With the Japanese form of counting there is no need to specify the type of object being enumerated.

Mitsu kudasai
三つ下さい
(Please) give me 3.

When the Chinese form of counting is used a 'counter' (*joshuushi*, 助数詞) is used to specify the type of object being enumerated. To ask for 3 sheets of paper we would say.

Kami o san-mai kudasai.
紙を三枚下さい
(Please) give me 3 sheets of paper.

There are many counters for various types of objects and a sample is given here.

Counter	Type of object	Example	Exceptions
gatsu が、月	months of the year		
hiki ひき、匹	animals (small)	cats, dogs	
too とう、頭	animals (big)	tigers, elephants	
hon ほん、本	round, thin objects	bottles, pencils	
ka か、日	days of the month	from 1-10, and 14	1st tsuitachi ついたち 14th juuyokka じゅうよっか
ken けん、軒	houses, buildings		
ko こ、個	small objects	apples	
rei まい、枚	thin flat objects	paper, stamps	
nichi にち、日	days of the month	from 11 to 31	14th juu yokka じゅうよっか 20th hatsuka はつか
nin にん、人	people		1 hitori, 2. futari ひとり、ふたり
satsu さつ、冊	books		
wa わ、羽	birds, rabbits		

For counters that begin with *h* such as *hiki* and *hon*, there is an euphonic change with 1, 3, 6, 8 and 10. Thus the enumeration with *hon* would be as follows:

ippon, *nihon*, *sambon*, *yonhon*, *gohon*,
roppon, *nanahon*, *happon*, *kyuhon*, *jippon* (or *juppon*)

For counters that begin with *f* the euphonic change is with 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

ippun, *niFun*, *sampun*, *yompun*, *gofun*,
roppun, *nanafun*, *happun*, *kyuufun*, *jippun* (or *juppun*).

There are some exceptions as well. For example in the use of *nin* as a counter for people the enumeration starts with *hitori*, *futari* and then reverts to the normal *sannin*, *yonin*, ...etc.

In counting days of the month, two counters are used, *ka* and *nichi*. The first 10 days use *ka*, with an exception for the 1st day which is called *tsuitachi*. From the 11th day onwards, *nichi* is used with exceptions for the 14th and 20th days are known as *juu yokka* and *hatsuka* respectively.

Sai is used to count the age of a person. Thus *gosai* is five years old. There is also an exception for one's 20th year, *hatachi*, the coming of age year for the Japanese.

The use of *wa* to count birds gives rise to the following interesting tongue twister where the third *ni wa* refers to the counter.

Niwa ni wa ni wa niwatori ga iru.
庭には二わにわとりがいる。
In the garden there are two chickens.

The Japanese consider the numbers 4 and 9 to be unlucky as 4 *shi* can also refer to death while 9 *ku*, can also mean pain or suffering.

In counting the traditional unit is not thousands but ten thousands. A ten thousand unit is known as *man*, and this gives rise to the following counting system.

ichi	一	1	
juu	十	10	
hyaku	百	100	
sen, issen	千	1000	
ichi man	万	10,000	ten thousand
juu man	十万	100,000	
hyaku man	百万	1,000,000	one million
sen man	千万	10,000,000	
ichi oku	一億	100,000,000	one hundred million
juu oku	十億	1,000,000,000	one billion
hyaku oku	百億	10,000,000,000	
sen oku	千億	100,000,000,000	
itchoo	一兆	1,000,000,000,000	one trillion

Thus ten thousand is counted as one *man* (one ten-thousand unit) and one *man man* is one *oku*.

Because of the many similar sounds for different words (homonyms) in Japanese, this allows some fun in puns with numbers. A Department Store known as Ishibashi (Stonebridge) has chosen 1484 as their store sign as this number 1-4-8-4 can be read i-shi-ha-shi. A fast food store chain called Golden Sunrise sign themselves as 5 ドン 3 ライス with a mixture of numbers and katakana which can be read as *go-don san-rat-su*.

This association can also be used to remember numbers in Japanese. For example if the apartment of a friend's place that one visits often is 4919 then we can memorise the number as *yoku iku* which represents 4-9-1-9 but can also mean 'to go often'.

Chapter 6

Expressions kyoogen 表現

In this chapter we will look at some interesting expressions, exclamations, phrases and buzz-words. To begin, some exclamations of surprise are:

Honto	ほんと (↑)	Really?
Uso	うそ (↓)	You're kidding! (It's a lie).
Ee	ええ (↑)	What!
Hee	へえ (↑)	Indeed! Wow!
Oya	おや (↓)	Oh!
Maa (fem)	まあ (↓)	Oh!, My!
Ara (fem)	あら !	Oh!, My!
Are (mas)	あれ !	Oh!, My!

The up arrow indicates a rising tone at the end of the word and the down arrow indicates a falling tone. Note that some exclamations are used more by women and others by men. Women tend to lengthen the ending, for example, *hee*, *maa* where the ending sounds are lengthened in exaggerated emphasis.

It is quite common to hear the following expressions to express the speaker's surprise and disbelief:

Ee, honto desu ka.
ええ、ほんとうですか。(↑)
What! Really?

Masaka.
まさか。
Are you kidding?

Shinjirarenai.
信じられない。
That's unbelievable. (I cannot believe it.)

The above expression comes from *shinjiru*, to believe. This verb is changed into the potential form (*shinjiareru*, can be believed) by the addition of *-rareru* and then negated by the addition of *-nai*.

Other words to express one's opinion or impressions are:

Hai	はい (↓)	Yes, I agree.
Ee	ええ (↓)	Yes, I agree.
Naruhodo	なるほど (↓)	Oh, I see!
Soo desu ka	そうですか (↓)	Is that so? (Really?)
Soo desu ne	そうですね (↓)	I agree.
Soo deshou ne	そうですね (↓)	Yes, I guess so.
Oya oya	おやおや (↓)	Oh dear!

Naruhodo has the meaning of 'really, indeed'. It has a sense of coming to understand something with a bit of surprise at the result. '*Naruhodo, Nihongo*' is the title for this book as we

wanted to impart a sense of 'Oh, I see - that's Japanese' or 'Of course, it's Japanese!' There is a popular Japanese TV quiz show that is titled *Naruhodo, the World*. Contestants are shown some weird and wonderful things from around the world and they have to guess what they are. There is the element of surprise at the revelation.

The following words may be used to gain attention.

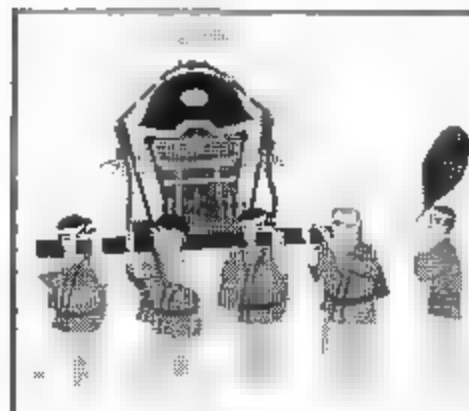
Moshi moshi.	もしもし	Excuse me. (hello!).
Chotto.	ちょっと	Excuse me. (A moment..)
Nee. (fem)	ねえ	Excuse me. (You know..)
Kore.	これ	Hey!
Oi	おい	Hey! you!
Hora	ほら	Look!, Listen!

Moshi moshi (hello!) is used over the telephone to gain attention. *Nee* is feminine and both *ne* and *nee* are considered impolite and should be used in informal situations only. *Kore* and *oi* are also informal and to be used amongst friends and colleagues only. *Hora* may be used to direct one's attention to something.

Hora, koko desu.
ほら、ここです。
Look! it's right here.

When doing things in a group, the following expressions may be useful. *Wasshoi, wasshoi* can be heard from the people carrying the portable shrine (*omikoshi*) to the temple at their local festival.

Yooi don.	よういどん	Let's go.
Wasshoi.	わっしょい	Heave ho!



Carrying the *omikoshi* to cries of *wasshoi wasshoi*.

When visiting one another, there are some standard expressions that are used by the Japanese:

Gomen kudasai.
ごめん下さい。
Anyone home? (lit. excuse me)

Tsumaranai mono desu ga.
つまらないものですが。
Please accept this small gift.

O-kuchi ni aimasen deshoo ga.
お口に合いませんでしょうが。
Not sure if you'll like the taste..

Itadakimasu.
いただきます。
Bon appetit. (lit. I'll partake of the meal).

Gochisoosama deshita
ごちそうさまでした。
It was a great meal.

Kampai!
かんぱい！
Cheers! (Bottoms up!)

Sorosoro shitsurei shimasu.
そろそろしつれいします。
I'll be leaving soon.

Gomen kudasai is used at the door to announce one's presence. On handing a gift over, the expression *tsumaranai mono desu ga* is used to indicate that the gift is a small, trifling and worthless (*tsumaranai*) thing only. If the gift is edible, then *o-kuchi ni amasen deshoo ga* may be used instead to indicate that it may not be agreeable to one's taste. Such is the level of humbleness.

Before partaking of food, *itadakimasu* is said aloud. *Gochisoosama deshita* expresses thanks for the meal. Literally it means that one (*sama* - to address a person) has been the recipient of the meal, treat or feast (*chisoo*).

Kampai! is the expression to offer a toast on drinking.

To indicate that one will be leaving soon, we can say *sorosoro shitsurei shimasu* which means "very shortly, I'll be rude [and leave]".

Probably the one word which is most useful is *doomo*. *Doomo* is used in combination to express "thank you", "excuse me" or "sorry".

Doomo arigatoo gozaimasu.
どうもありがとうございます。
Thank you very much.

Doomo sumimasen.
どうもすみません。
Excuse me. My apologies.

Doomo oyama shimashita.
どうもおじゃしました。
I'm sorry to have bothered you.

Doomo shitsurei shimashita.
どうもしつれいしました。
I'm sorry to have been rude (in taking your time etc).

Doomo by itself comes from "*doo mo*" meaning how ever, in all ways. Thus adding *doomo* to *arigatoo gozaimasu* (thank you) makes it a profuse thank you.

As *doomo* is used for emphasis in these expressions, very often one can get by by just saying "*doomo..*". The situation will determine if one meant "thank you", "excuse me" or "sorry"!

A very common expression that one is bound to hear is:

Gambatte (kudasai).
がんばって下さい。
Hang in there! (Keep it up!)

This expression is used when friends or colleagues exhort one to keep at it or to try harder. So when your Japanese studies seem to be painstakingly slow, *gambatte ne!*

Chapter 7

Quarrelsome Words kenkago

けんか語

In this chapter we will look at some words that will start a fight or help us win one. Most of these have a masculine (m) or feminine (f) usage.

Dakara, itta deshou. (f)
だから、言ったでしょう。
Dakara, itta daroo. (m)
だから、言っただろう。
I told you so!

Dakara, doo na no. (f)
だから、どうなの。
Dakara, doo nan da. (m)
だから、どうなんだ。
So what?

Ikagen ni shite. (f)
いい加減にして。

Quarrelsome Words (kenkago)

Ikagen ni shiro. (m)
いい加減にしろ。
That's enough!

Joodan jaa nai wa. (f)
冗談じゃあないわ。
Joodan jaa nai yo. (m)
冗談じゃあないよ。
Don't be ridiculous!

Shitsukoi wa ne. (f)
しつこいわね。
Shitsukoi ne. (m)
しつこいね。
What a pest!

Hottoite. (f)
ほっといて。
Hottoite kure. (m)
ほっといてくれ。
Leave me alone!

Ooki na o-sewa.
大きなお世話。
It's none of your business!

Moo unzari yo. (f)
もううんざりよ。
Moo unzari da. (m)
もううんざりだ。
I'm sick and tired of it!

O-ai nikusama.
おあいにくさま。
Tough luck!

Nare nare shiku shinai de. (f)
なれなれしくしないで。
Nare nare shiku suru na yo. (m)
なれなれしくするなよ。
Don't get fresh with me!

Baka ni shinai de. (f)
ばかにしないで。。
Baka ni suru na yo. (m)
ばかにするなよ。
Don't make a fool of me!

Hito de nashi
人でなし。
[You're] a cold blooded beast.

Zamaa mi nasai. (f)
ざまあ見なさい。
Zamaa miro. (m)
ざまあ見ろ。
You deserved it!

With all these heated words, we should end by patching up and being friends again.

Sakki wa gomen nasai. (f)
さっきはごめんなさい。
Sakki wa gomen ne. (m)
さっきはごめんね。
I'm sorry for what happened (just now).

Kono aida wa gomen nasai (f)
この間はごめんなさい。
Kono aida wa gomen ne. (m)

この間はごめんね。
Forgive me (for this time).

Watashi ga warukatta no yo. (f)
わたしが悪かったのよ。
Boku ga warukattan da. (m)
ぼくが悪かったんだ。
I'm sorry. (I was horrid.)

Sono koto wa mizu ni nagasoo.
そのことは水に流そう。
Let's forgive and forget.

Moo ichi do yari naoshimashoo. (f)
もう一度やり直しましょう。
Moo ichi do yari naosoo. (m)
もう一度やり直そう。
Let's patch up.

Chapter 8

Four Letter Words warui kotoba 悪い言葉

As a follow on from the quarrelsome words, let's look at some *warui kotoba* (悪い言葉), or *bad words*. This is one topic that most text books shy away from but is one that most students would want to find out about.

For starters, here are some 4 letter words:

Baka!	ばか!	Fool! Twit!
Kuso!	くそ!	Shit! Damn!
Ahoo!	あほう!	Idiot! Moron!

Most of these words do not need further explanation nor long sentences to put them in context.

Other words that one may chance to hear are:

Chē!	ちゅっ!	Damn!
Baka yaroo!	ばかやろう!	Fool! Idiot! (Jerk!)

Four Letter Words (warui kotoba)

Kono yaroo!	このやろう!	Fool! Idiot!
Tomma!	とんま!	Idiot!
Manuke!	まぬけ!	Stupid!
Chikushoo!	ちくしょう!	Hell! Damn it!
Sukeber!	すけべい!	Lecher! Pervert!
Eitchi!	エッチ!	Pervert! (Perversion).
Kono Ama!	このあま!	Bitch!

The word *etchi* comes from the letter *h* to mean *hentas*, an abnormality or perversion.

Some words to tell someone to *buzz off* are:

Jamada!	じゃまだ!	Nuisance!
Doke!	どけ!	Keep off!
Uzero!	うせろ!	Get out of my sight!
Shine!	死ね! (しね)	Drop dead! Go to hell!

A word of caution It should be kept in mind that the force of these bad words is much stronger to the Japanese ear. As the language already has levels of politeness, just using an impolite form can convey quite a strong feeling. For example a very strong feeling of disrespect can be conveyed just by using *kimu* and *omae*, the impolite forms of address for *you*.

Chapter 9

Kana

かな

Kana are the Japanese syllables from which all words are composed. There are fifty syllables called *gojuuon* (ごじゅうおん、五十音) or fifty sounds. There are two sets of symbols that are used to represent these fifty sounds.

One is *hiragana* (ひらがな、平仮名) which is the common or ordinary (*hira*) type of kana (with euphonic change to *gana*).

Hiragana (ひらがな、平仮名)

a	ka	sa	ta	na	ha	ma	ya	ra	wa	n
あ	か	さ	た	な	は	ま	や	ら	わ	ん
i	ki	shi	chi	ni	hi	mi		ri	wi	
い	き	し	ち	に	ひ	み		り	ゐ	
u	ku	su	tsu	nu	fu	mu	yu	ru		
う	く	す	つ	ぬ	ふ	む	ゆ	る		
e	ke	se	te	ne	he	me		re	we	
え	け	せ	て	ね	へ	め		れ	ゑ	
o	ko	so	to	no	ho	mo	yo	ro	wo	
お	こ	そ	と	の	ほ	も	よ	ろ	を	

The table above is basically a 5x10 table; hence the name *fifty sounds* (*gojuuon*). As can be seen from the table, there are only three syllables for the *y* sounds. Also the *wi* and *wo* syllables are no longer used. The final *n* (ん) sound is tacked on to the end of the table.

The *k*, *s* and *t* sounds have euphonic changes. These are represented by adding two small strokes (^, a diacritic mark) to the top right corner of the syllables. As a result, the euphonic changes are: *k* to *g*; *s* to *z*; and *t* to *d*. For example:

ka ga かーが
ki gi きーぎ
sa -- zu さーざ
ta -- da たーだ

The *h* sounds have two euphonic changes. The first, *h* to *b*, is represented by the two small strokes. The second, *h* to *p*, is represented by adding a small circle (°) to the top right corner of the syllables.

ha -- ba はーば
ha -- pa はーぱ
hi -- bi ひーび
hi -- pi ひーぴ

Another euphonic device is the *soku-on*. This is the lengthening of a consonant to create a 'double consonant'. This lengthening of the consonant is indicated by a *tsu* (っ) symbol but reduced in size. Thus we have

kaki かき persimmon, oyster
kakki かっき spirit, energy

When voicing a double consonant care should be taken to ensure that the lengthened consonant is given an 'extra beat'.

The sequence *a-ka-sa-* is important as this is the order in which words are listed in Japanese dictionaries. In order to be able to use these dictionaries effectively, it is recommended that this sequence be committed to memory. So you should be able to recite *a-ka-sa-ta-na-ha-ma-ya-ra-wa* without hesitation! Within each group of sounds, the words will be listed in *a-i-u-e-o* order. Thus for the *m* sounds the order will be *ma-mi-mu-me-mo*.

Hiragana is written in a cursive style and is used to represent Japanese concepts and words. It is also used as the ending part when used in combination with Chinese characters (kanji). For example hiragana is used as verb endings which could indicate tenses or moods. The following example shows how hiragana is used with the kanji for *eat*:

taberu	食べる	to eat
tabemashita	食べました	eaten
tabetai	食べたい	want to eat

The other set of kana is *katakana* (かたかな、片仮名). Katakana is so named because the symbols used were derived from parts (kata: fragment, piece) of kanji characters.

As katakana were originally parts of kanji, they are written in an angular style. For example the katakana syllable *ka* (カ) comes from the kanji 加 which has a sound-reading of 'ka'. Katakana is used to represent foreign words (see chapter on Borrowed Words). It is also used with Japanese words for effect or emphasis.

Katakana (かたかな、片仮名)

a	ka	sa	ta	na	ha	ma	ya	ra	wa	n
ア	カ	サ	タ	ナ	ハ	マ	ヤ	ラ	ワ	ン
i	ki	shi	chi	ni	hi	mi		ri	wi	
イ	キ	シ	チ	ニ	ヒ	ミ		リ	ウィ	
u	ku	su	tsu	nu	fu	mu	yu	ru		
ウ	ク	ス	ツ	ヌ	フ	ム	ユ	ル		
e	ke	se	te	ne	he	me		re	we	
エ	ケ	セ	テ	ネ	ヘ	メ		レ	ウェ	
o	ko	so	to	no	ho	mo	yo	ro	wo	
オ	コ	ソ	ト	ノ	ホ	モ	ヨ	ロ	ヲ	

In the above hiragana and katakana tables the *a-i-u-e-o* levels represent the five levels or *godan*. All verb inflections belong to one of these levels. The 'dictionary form' of a verb belongs to the *u*-level. Thus all dictionary (or plain, basic) form of verbs end with syllables in the *u*-level. For example.

kau	かう	to buy
aruku	あるく	to walk
nomu	のむ	to drink
taberu	たべる	to eat
miru	みる	to see
kuru	くる	to come
suru	する	to do

When verbs are inflected to take on endings with syllables in the *a*-level, one of the basic meanings represented is that of negation. (There are other representations such as the causative.) Examples of negation are given below. Note that *kau* has changed to *kawu* for euphonic reasons. For the group 2 verbs, *taberu* and *miru*, the *ra* syllable has been dropped for euphonic reasons. The irregular verbs, *kuru* and *suru*, also change form

kawanai	かわない	do not buy
---------	------	------------

arukanai	あるかない	do not walk
nomanai	のまない	do not drink
tabenai	たべない	do not eat
minai	みない	do not see
konai	こない	do not come
shinai	しない	do not do

With the *i*-level, verbs could be followed by *-masu*, which is the inflected polite form for a verb.

kaimasu	かいます	to buy (polite)
arukimasu	あるきます	to walk (polite)
nomimasu	のみます	to drink (polite)
tabemasu	たべます	to eat (polite)
mimasu	みまし	to see (polite)
kimasu	きます	to come (polite)
shimasu	します	to do (polite)

In addition, if the verb at the *i*-level is followed by *-tai* then a wish or desire is indicated.

kaitai	かいたい	want to buy
arukitai	あるきたい	want to walk
nomitai	のみたい	want to drink
tabetai	たべたい	want to eat
mitai	みたい	want to see
kitai	きたい	want to come
shitai	したい	want to do

Verbs with syllables from the *e*-level represent (among others) the imperative form. Note that the group 2 and irregular verbs have undergone changes.

kae	かえ	Buy!
-----	----	------

aruke	あるけ	Walk!
nome	のめ	Drink!
tabero	たべろ	Eat!
muro	みろ	Look!
koi	こい	Come!
shiro	しろ	Do!

By inflecting with syllables from the *o*-level, verbs take on a volition form:

kaoo	かおう	let's buy
arukoo	あるこう	let's walk
nomoo	のもう	let's drink
tabeyoo	たべよう	let's eat
myoo	みよう	let's see
koyoo	こよう	let's come
shuyoo	しよう	let's do

Note that *taberu* has an euphonic change to *tabeyoo* rather than to *taberoo*. Again these group 2 verbs and the irregular verbs *kuru* and *suru* have undergone changes.

The discussion above has been a brief foray into the *godan*. With this basic understanding, you should be able to put other inflections into this classification scheme.

Chapter 10

Borrowed Words gairaigo 外来語

As a result of western influences from Europe and America, many foreign words from these countries have been incorporated into the Japanese language. These borrowed words are called *gairaigo*. *Gairaigo* is written with katakana to indicate their foreign origin.

Pan パン comes from the Portuguese word for bread. The following are a selection of words related to food that have a foreign origin:

aisukurimu	アイスクリーム	ice cream
asuparagasu	アスパラガス	asparagus
baikingu	バイキング	buffet
hambaagaa	ハンバーガー	hamburger
juusu	ジュース	juice
koohii	コーヒー	coffee
kyabetsu	キャベツ	cabbage
Makudonarudo	マクドナルド	McDonalds

Borrowed Words (gairaigo)

miruku	ミルク	milk
mooningu setto	モーニングセット	morning set
omuretsu	オムレツ	omelet
pan	パン	bread
piiman	ピーマン	pimento (Spanish), capsicum
piza	ピザ	pizza
reiasu	レタス	lettuce
sandoicchi	サンドイッチ	sandwich
supagetti	スパゲッティ	spaghetti
tabako	タバコ	cigarettes
tomato	トマト	tomato
toosuto	トースト	toast

To stress an order for hot coffee rather than iced coffee, we can use *hotto koohii* (ホットコーヒー). *Orenji juusu* (オレンジジュース) means orange juice.

Some borrowed foreign words have been used to create new concepts. For example, a *mooningu setto* is a set breakfast of a thick slice of plain buttered toast, a salad side dish, a hard boiled egg or fried egg, and a choice of coffee or tea.

Armed with *gairaigo*, it is easy to say things like:

Makudonarudo ni hambaagaa o tabe ni ikimashoo.
マクドナルドにハンバーガーを
食べに行きましょう。
Let's go to McDonalds for hamburgers.

The term *baikingu* means a buffet. This word is derived from *viking* and is probably an indirect reference to the Swedish *smorgasbord*. Thus we may get the following invitation to lunch.
Chuuka ryoon no baikingu ni ikimashoo.
中華料理のバイキングに行きましょう。

Let's go to a Chinese-style buffet.

Other words that we may come across that refer to the home are:

denshi renji	電子レンジ	microwave oven
koin randorii	コインランドリー	coin laundry
mai hoomu	マイホーム	my home
ni eru dai kee	2LDK	two bedrooms, lounge, dining, and kitchenette
san dai kee	3DK	three bedrooms, dining and kitchenette

A *denshi renji*, electric range, is a *microwave oven*; while a *koin randorii* is a public laundrette where coins are needed to operate the machines.

Mai hoomu is the dream of most Japanese, which is to own their own home. This dream home could be 2LDK which means it has two bedrooms, a lounge and a dining room with a kitchenette. A 3DK is a home with three bedrooms and a dining room with a kitchenette.

The following are some words related to entertainment. While they sound familiar some have taken on a slightly different shade of meaning.

anime	アニメ	animation
bideo	ビデオ	video
kurooku	クローク	cloakroom
noo katto	ノーカット	no cut
roodo shoo	ロードショー	road show
sain	サイン	sign (autograph)
aidoru	アイドル	idol

Anime refers to animation. The current wave of Japanese animation spans from children stories to comedy to science fiction and fantasy to adult themes and has a growing overseas following.

Noo katto means a film that has not been cut, that is an uncensored film.

Kono eiga wa noo katto de jooci saremasu.
この映画はノーカットで上映されます。
This movie will be shown uncut.

When it is a first run movie that is being shown then it is a *roodo shoo*.

To get a *sain* is to obtain the autograph, i.e. signature, of a celebrity.

Taroo wa Madonna no sain o motte iru.
たろうはマドンナのサインを持っている。
Taro has Madonna's autograph.

The word *aidoru* refers generally to a young girl that has been groomed to appear cute while belting out her pop numbers. Her career is usually short lived, only to be replaced by yet another *aidoru*.

There are many *gairaigo* words to be found in modern Japanese. Sometimes such a borrowed word replaces a perfectly good Japanese word. However more and more such words are being assimilated. The following is a further list of *gairaigo*:

etchi	エッチ	dirty minded
ernio	エリート	elite

gasorin sutando	ガソリンスタンド	gasoline stand, petrol station
koin rokkaa	コインロッカー	coin locker
posuto	ポスト	letter box, mail box
reji	レジ	register
uuman ribu	ウーマンリブ	women's lib

Etchi is the sound for 'h' from *hentai* which means abnormality. It refers to a person with a dirty mind.

Ano hito wa etchi da.
あの人はエッチだ。
He is a dirty old man.

A person that comes from a good University may be referred to as *erito*.

John wa Haabado daigaku o deta erito da.
ジョンはハーバード大学を出たエリートだ。
John is a Harvard man.

A *reji* is the cash register where one pays the bill

Asoko no reji de haratte kudasai.
あそこのレジで払って下さい。
Please pay at that cash register.

Chapter 11

Office Speak ofisu no gairaigo オフィスの外来語

Following on from our discussion of borrowed words, we will now look at some *gairaigo* that refer to the office environment.

An example is *sarariman* (サラリーマン) which literally means a salaried man and refers to an office or white-collar worker

Another word is *oaeru* which stands for OL, the first letters from Office Lady. This refers to female office workers usually of clerical or secretarial rank

The following are some words related to the office and work:

apointo	アポイント	appointment
arubaito	アルバイト	part-time or casual work
boonasu	ボーナス	bonus
fakkusu	ファックス	fax
karaoke	カラオケ	Empty Orchestra

kyaria uuman	キャリアウーマン	career woman
nego	ネゴ	negotiation
oeru	オーエル	OL (Office Lady)
pasokon	パソコン	Personal Computer
paato	パート	part-time job
saabisu	サービス	giveaway item, discount
saidobijinesu	サイドビジネス	side business, second job
saraniman	サラリーマン	white collar worker (salaried man)
sekuhara	セクハラ	sexual harassment
suto	スト	strike
waapuro	ワープロ	Word Processor

Arubanto comes from the German *arbeit*, to work, but the meaning has undergone a transformation to mean part-time or casual work.

A *boonasu* is what most Japanese workers expect once or twice in a year. Bonuses may be given in the middle of the year during chuugen the time of the Bon festival and Bon presents are given. The other time for bonuses are at the end of the year when end of year parties (boonenkai, abound. In relation to the year end, Christmas Eve is referred to as *ibu* (イブ))

Karaoke is a favorite pastime of saraniman and OLs where Karaoke establishments and clubs provide musical accompaniment from laser disks and each person takes turns to sing the lyrics. The word is derived from this concept of an empty orchestra and is made up of *kara* (empty) and *oke* from *orchestra*. The same *kara* (empty) occurs with *te* hand) in *Karate* which stands for 'empty hand'.

Pasokon and *waapuro* are made up from the first few syllables of their English counterparts.

Paato, like *arubanto*, means part time work.

Haha wa depaato de paato o shite imasu.
母はデパートでパートをしています。
My mom works part time at the Department store.

Saabisu is another word that has changed its meaning after being adopted and adapted into the Japanese vocabulary. While the root word is *service*. *Saabisu* may mean to give a discount as in 'saabisu suru'. More frequently it refers to a freebie, something that is given free with a purchase. In this case, the seller will say 'kore wa saabisu desu'

Saido bijinesu, as the term implies is having a business on the side.

Tanaka san wa saido bijinesu ni katei kyooshu o shite iru.
田中さんはサイドビジネスに家庭教師をしている。
Mr Tanaka gives home tuition as a side business.

Suto is derived from *strike*, i.e. to go on strike.

Kyoo wa sensei no suto ga aru kara gakkoo wa yasumi da.
今日は先生のストがあるから学校は休みだ。
As the teachers are on strike, school is closed today.

Chapter 12

i-ro-ha

いろは

Here is a challenge: take the forty eight kana syllables a,i,u,e,o,k,a,k,i. (あ、い、う、え、お、か、き。); use them once and only once each to make a meaningful passage!

Not only has this been done but the result is a poem that exhorts us to transcend the changing and fleeting nature of life. The iroha (いろは) poem runs as follows:

Iro wa(ha) ru(h)o(h)edo(to)	いろはにおへど	色は匂へど
Chiri nuru (w)o	ちりぬるを	散りぬるを
Waga(ka) yo tare zo(so)	わがよたれぞ	我が世誰ぞ
Tsune naramu	つねならむ	常ならむ
U(w)i no okuyama	うゐのおくやま	有為の奥山
Kyoo(kefu) koete	けふこえて	今日越えて
Asaki yume miji(shi)	あさきゆめみじ	浅き夢見じ
Ei(we-bi) mo sezu(su)	哀ひもせず	酔もせず

The syllables in brackets show the kana represented. For example *zo* represents the use of the syllable *so* as this syllable is the root for it. *(W)o* shows the use of the syllable *wo* which is now rendered as *o*. *W(i)* and *w(e)* are the original forms which

are not used nowadays. *Kefu* is an older word meaning *kyoo* (today). Although the syllable *n* does not appear in the poem, it can be added at the end as the *n(o)* *desu* form to emphasize the explanation.

An approximate translation of the lines of the poem is as follows:

the colors glow
scatter and disperse
this world of ours, who
is eternal
the inner mountains of life's vicissitudes
cross over today
have no shallow dreams
and no intoxication

This poem dates back to the Heian period, around the middle of AD900. It was originally ascribed to a priest as the poem has a Buddhist theme. However the author is not known.

This ancient poem is very dear to the hearts of the Japanese especially those of the older generation. A rendering of this poem in calligraphic style is presented in the following page.

While the more common order for the syllables is a-i-u-e-o (あいうえお), this poem provides a classical i-ro-ha (いろは) arrangement for the syllables in the order of the appearance of the syllables in the poem.

In beautiful Nikko, about 80 miles north of Tokyo, the roads in this area are known as the iroha-zaka slopes to indicate the many zigzag windy turns.

Chapter 13

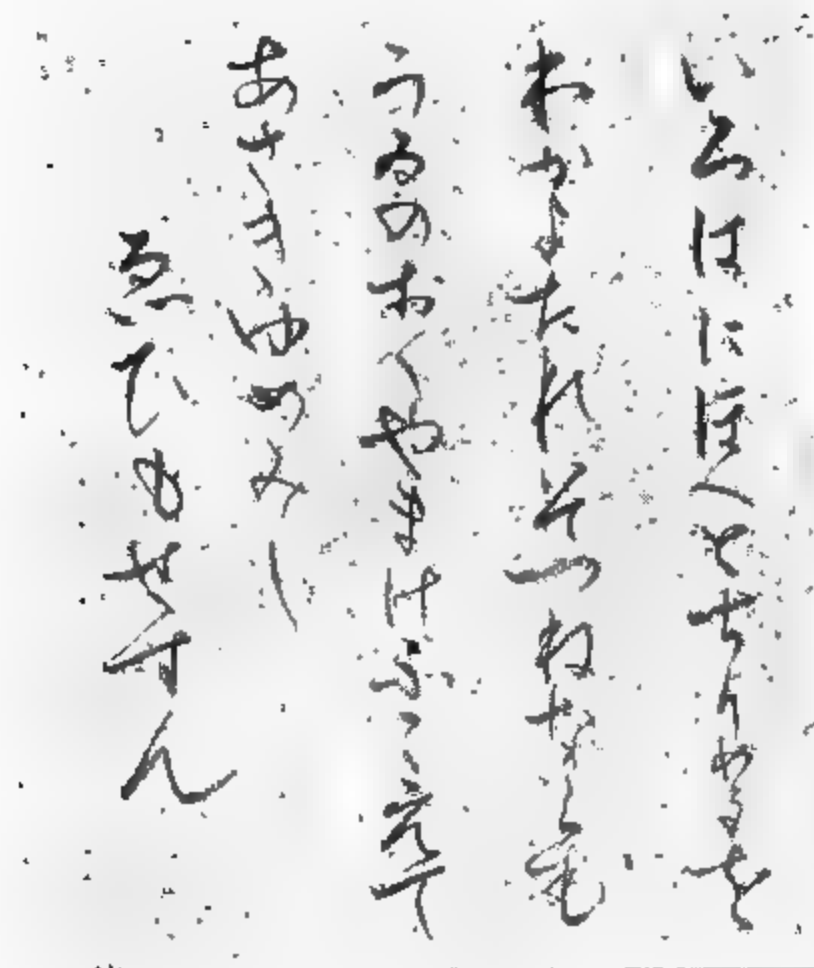
Kanji 漢字

Kanji (かんじ、漢字) are the Chinese characters that have been adopted and adapted in written Japanese. Literally kanji means the Han (漢, i.e. Chinese) characters (字, ji). Kanji were initially introduced to Japan around 280 AD and this was followed by three waves of borrowing, the first wave happening around 550AD with the introduction of Buddhism.

Kanji are the Chinese characters that are used to represent objects and concepts. Although there are many thousands of Chinese characters, the Japanese have standardized on the usage of Kanji and produced an authorized list of about 2000 kanji.

Kanji may be used singly such as 本 (hon,ほん) to represent *book* or *books*. This character can also mean *main* or *origin*. The power comes in when different kanji are combined to produce new meanings. For example *hon* (本, main) with *sha* (社, company) gives 本社 (honsha, head office).

When the Chinese character was absorbed into the Japanese language the Chinese *reading* of the character accompanied the written form. This reading is known as the *on-reading* (on-



The *Iroha* poem written in calligraphic style

yomi, おんよみ、音読み), that is the *sound* reading. In addition, the kanji was also used to represent native Japanese words that have related meanings. This is the *kun-reading* (kun-yomi, くんよみ、訓読み), that is the *instructive* reading.

Hence the kanji 本 has an on-yomi of *hon*, meaning *book*, *main* or *origin*. It also has a kun-yomi of *moto* (もと) which is a native Japanese word meaning *origin*. Note that some characters may have more than one *on* or *kun* readings.

In the written form for Japanese, kanji is used in conjunction with hiragana and katakana. Hence a typical sentence in Japanese will contain both Kanji and hiragana and perhaps some katakana. For example the following sentence about today's weather uses kanji and hiragana.

Kyoo wa yoi tenki desu
今日は良い天気です。
It's a nice day today

Hiragana is used to represent the particles, and adjective and verb inflections. The line containing hiragana only is given here as an aid to reading. The normal way of writing is the first line with both kanji and hiragana. As katakana is used mainly for foreign words and special emphasis, it is used slightly less frequently than hiragana.

A kanji character can be viewed as being written within a square area. Besides simple kanji, most kanji can be broken up into elements. Let us take a look at the first kanji from *honsha* (本社), head office.

The kanji for *hon* (本) is made of the elements 木 and 一. The first element is *ki* (木) which means *tree* or *wood*. By adding a horizontal stroke to the base of the tree, a new

character 本 is created, with meanings of *book*, *main* or *origin*. The 木 element is called the radical part of the character 本. Specifically it is the 'tree' radical. In general, the radical provides a clue to the meaning of the kanji. Hence the kanji for *hon* (本) having a *tree* radical (木 *ki* *hen*) will most likely have a meaning that has something to do with tree or wood.

The simpler kanji evolved from pictorial representation of the object being named. The following examples illustrate this.

yama	やま	山	mountain
kawa	かわ	川	river
hi	ひ	日	sun
tsuki	つき	月	moon
kuchi	くち	口	mouth

With the two kanji 日 (*hi*, *ni* - sun) and 本 (*hon* - origin), we obtain:

nihon にほん 日本 Japan (origin of the sun)

How does one look up a particular kanji in a Japanese character dictionary? There are usually three or four different indexing schemes.

One method is to use an *on/kun* reading index. For each such reading the kanji that have the reading are listed together with their kanji reference number in the main text. This method presumes that one knows the reading.

Another method is via a radical chart. In this case the radical index is consulted to see from what page characters having that radical are listed. The kanji are arranged in the dictionary in radical order and for each radical in increasing stroke order, that is the number of strokes it takes to write the character.

Somewhat akin to the radical chart is the radical index. Here all characters that have the same radical are listed with their kanji number. Sometimes, the list for a particular radical will also include kanji that are incorrectly thought to belong to that radical. This will aid in the search for the kanji.

If all this fails one can also locate a kanji by stroke order. This involves counting the number of strokes it takes to write the kanji and looking the kanji up in the stroke index. Again the list for a particular stroke number would most likely include kanji that have their strokes incorrectly counted as that number.

Electronic dictionaries are now available. They also provide the same lookup methods.

Let us look at the formation of some kanji.

The kanji for tree is 木. By putting two and three of these pictograms together we get:

木	ki	tree
林	hayashi	woods
森	mori	forest

The kanji for strength or power is 力. By putting three of these pictograms together with the ten-radical, we get co-operation.

力	chikara	strength, power
協	kyoo	co-operation.

Two characters that represent graphically their meaning are 凸 deko, for convex or protrusion and 凹 boko, for hollow or depression. Putting these together we get:

凸	deko	convex, protrusion
凹	boko	hollow, depression
凸凹	dekoboko	unevenness, roughness

Kono michi wa dekokoko desu nee.

この道は凸凹ですねえ。

This road is bumpy isn't it?

Chapter 14

Onomatopoeia giseigo, gitaigo 擬声語、擬態語

Onomatopoeia are words that mimic the sounds they represent (e.g. *sizzle*) or are suggestive of the qualities of the objects or actions they represent (e.g. *teensy-weensy*).

There are many such words in Japanese. Words that describe sounds are called *giseigo* (ぎせいご、擬声語). Words that describe quality or manner are called *gitaigo* (ぎたいご、擬態語). These onomatopoeic words are generally used as adverbs.

The sounds that animals make seem to be different according to the language of the land. In Japan, dogs *wan-wan* and pigs *buu-buu*. A short list of animal speak is as follows:

cats	nyaa nyaa	ニャーニャー
chicks	piyo piyo	ピヨピヨ
cows	moo moo	モーモー
dogs	wan wan	ワンワン

Onomatopoeia (giseigo, gitaigo)

frogs	kero kero	ケロケロ
horses	hi him	ヒヒーン
owls	hoo hoo	ホーホー
pigs	buu buu	ブーブー

Tonari no inu wa itsumo wan wan naku.
となりの犬はいつもワンワンなく。
The neighborhood dogs are always barking.

Hiyoko wa piyo piyo nakinagara sae o tsutsuite iru.
ひよこはピヨピヨ鳴きながらさえをつついている。
The chicks are cheeping and pecking at the food.

Be careful with the Japanese *moo moo* for cows as this sound is the *mo* モ sound and not the English 'moo'. The same applies to *hoo hoo* for owls.

Some onomatopoeic words to describe frequency or manner of doing things are.

shiba shiba often
しばしば

Tanaka san wa shiba shiba kaisha o yasumu.
田中さんはしばしば会社を休む。
Mr Tanaka often takes leave of absence from the office.

dan dan gradually
だんだん

Dan dan atatakaku natte kimashita.
だんだんあたたかくなってきましたね。
It's gradually getting warmer isn't it?

norō norō lazily
のろのろ

Norō norō arukuna.
だらだら歩くな。
Don't walk lazily. (Don't dawdle.)

don don quickly, rapidly
どんどん

Don don meshiagatte kudasai.
どんどん召し上がって。
Please eat up.

bura-bura to stroll along
ぶらぶら

Koen o bura bura sampo shimashita.
公園をぶらぶら散歩しました。
I strolled along in the park.

The popular pastime in Tokyo of having a Sunday stroll in Ginza when the main streets are closed to traffic is affectionately known as *Gin-bura*.

Some words to describe how one feels are:

gau gau hungry
ぐうぐう

Onaka ga gau gau naru.
おなかがぐうぐうなる。
I'm getting hungry. (*lit* My stomach is getting hungry.)

peko peko very hungry
ぺこぺこ

Onaka ga peko peko desu.
おなかがぺこぺこです。
I'm famished.

kura kura dizzy
くらくら

Atama ga kura kura desu.
頭がくらくらです。
I feel dizzy.

There are also onomatopoeic words to describe weather conditions. Examples are:

soyo soyo gently blowing
そよそよ

Kaze ga soyo soyo fute imasu.
風がそよそよ吹いています。
A wind is gently blowing.

hyuu hyuu billowing
ひゅうひゅう

Kaze ga hyuu hyuu fute imasu.
風がひゅうひゅう吹いています。
A strong wind is blowing.

jiri jiri very hot
じりじり

Kion ga jiri jiri agarimasu.

気温がじりじりあがります。

It's become very hot (lit. The temperature has risen to very hot.)

para para light rain falling

ぱらぱら

Ame ga para para futte kita no de aiai gasa o shumashita.

雨がぱらぱら降ってきたので相合傘をしました。

As a light rain started to fall we shared an umbrella together.

Note the term *aiai gasa* which means joined or united together (*aiai*) under an umbrella (*kasa*, with euphonic change to *gasa*). Hopefully on a rainy day, a friend might suggest an '*aiai gasa*' to you.

Chapter 15

Games geemu ゲーム

Let us look at the language of games. By games here we mean board and table type games.

A pack of playing cards is called *toranpu* (トランプ) which is derived from the word *trump* which occurs in many card games.

A set of cards which is uniquely Japanese is *hanafuda* 花札 (flower cards). The *hanafuda* card deck consists of forty eight cards. As the name implies, the cards have a flower theme.

There are twelve distinct flower suits with four cards in each suit. The twelve suits represent seasonal flora. These are - in order from January through December - pine, plum, cherry, wisteria, iris, peony, bush clover, pampas grass, chrysanthemum, maple, willow and pawlownia. The cards are beautifully illustrated in color and do not have pips. As with

playing cards, there are many variant games that can be played with hanafuda cards.

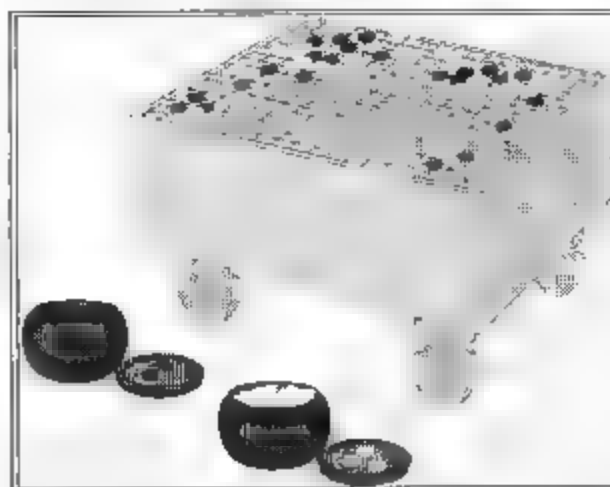


Hanafuda cards

Another uniquely Japanese card game is the *irohagaruta* which is a pack of cards (*karuta* having a phonetic change to *garuta*) based on the *iroha* syllables. The pack consists of two sets - one with individual poems each starting with a different syllable. The other set are illustrations of these poems. The objective is to pick the correct illustration for each poem card read in random order. The person with the largest number wins.

A game which many Japanese indulge in is *maajan* 麻雀. This is the Chinese game of mah-jongg although the rules differ. There are many maajan parlors to be found in the Japanese city streets where one can drop in for a game. These parlors can be identified by the kanji 麻雀 advertising signs.

Another game that originated in China that is very popular in Japan is the game of *Go* or *igo* 囲碁. This is a board game that is considered more complex than chess and the game has a vast following with regular TV broadcast. The game is played on a board with 19x19 lines. The pieces are either black or white stones only with no further rank distinctions. These stones are placed on the intersection points of the lines. Once placed they cannot be moved. Beautiful boards made from thick solid wooden slabs with ornate legs are sold in Japan and perhaps in local games and novelty shops.

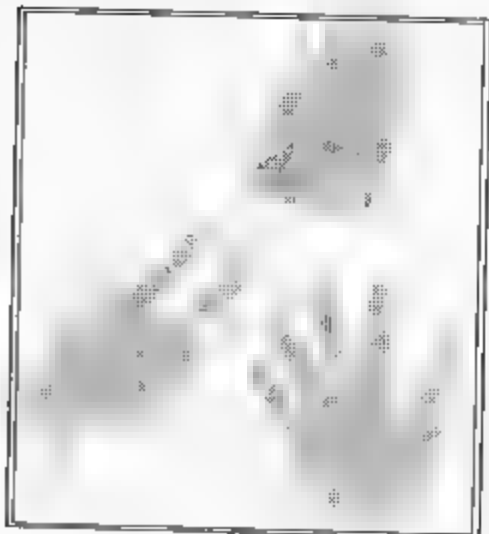


The game of igo

The objective in *Go* is to command as much area or territory as possible and in the process capture stones within one's territory. The winner is the one with the greater combined territory and captured stones count. In *go* the player with a lead, aggressive position has *sente* 先手 (upper hand) and the player in the weaker, defensive position has *gote* 後手.

Yasunari Kawabata, a Nobel Laureate for Literature, wrote a novel titled 'The Master of Go' which draws on the intricacies of Go as a backdrop in his novel

Jankenpon じゃんけんぽん is a pastime game especially popular amongst children. The idea is to form the shape of a stone, paper or scissors. A clenched fist represents stone, an open hand represents paper and scissors is represented by extending the second and middle fingers. Stone defeats (breaks) scissors, scissors defeats (cuts) paper and paper defeats (wraps) stone. These actions are called *gun* (ぐん), *choki* (ちょき) and *paa* (ぱあ) in Japanese.



The three shapes of
Jankenpon

While shouting 'jan-ken-pon!' participants hurl their right (or left) hands out and the outcome as to who wins is decided by whose chosen object is able to defeat the other object. Japanese of all ages use *jankenpon* to decide on a winner which is much like tossing a coin.

Chapter 16

Tongue Twisters hayakuchi kotoba 早口言葉

We are all familiar with the tongue twister "she sells seashells by the seashore". Tongue twisters are also to be found in Japanese and they are known as *hayakuchi kotoba* (はやくちことば、早口言葉).

A few *hayakuchi kotoba* are given here for you to practice and test your rapid speech skills.

To begin with here is a fairly common tongue twister that plays on *niwa* with *niwa* taking on different meanings.

Niwa ni wa ni-wa niwatori ga imasu.
にわにはにわにわとりがいます。
庭には二羽鶏がいます。
There are two chickens in the garden.

The first *niwa* refers to garden, the next *ni wa* is a combination of the preposition *ni* with the particle *wa*. The next

ni means two and *wa* is the counter for chickens and the last *nawa* is part of *niwatori* meaning chicken!

The next tongue twister has a play on the homonyms of *kisha*:

Kisha no kisha wa kisha de kisha shita.
きしゃのきしゃはきしゃできしゃした。
貴社の記者は汽車で帰社した。

The reporter from your office returned to the office by train.

The following hayakuchi kotoba has lots of repeating *mo* (も) and this is most clearly borne out when it is written in hiragana:

Sumomo mo momo mo momo no uchi.
すももももももものうち。
Both plums and peaches are kinds of peaches.

Watch that you don't trip over the *k* sounds on this one:

Tonari no kyaku wa yoku kaki kuu kyaku da.
となりのきやくはよくかきくうきやくだ。
The adjoining guest is a guest that eats a lot of persimmons.

The next one combines *to* and *kyo* sounds:

Tookyoo tokkyo kyoka kyoku.
とうきょうとっきょきょかきょく。
東京特許許可局。
The Tokyo patents (issuing) office.

And one final tongue twister with *pyo* and *ko* sounds:

Hiyoko pyoko pyoko mi pyoko pyoko.
ひよこぴよこぴよこみぴよこぴよこ。
The little chicks are cheeping and cheeping.

An interesting point is that aspiring radio and TV announcers in Japan have to recite tongue twisters as part of their qualifying examination.

Chapter 17

Modesty kenson 謙遜

One of the distinctive Japanese traits is modesty. The speaker adopts a humble position. This is reflected in the way a Japanese expresses himself.

For example when we bring a small gift to a host, we may state:

Tsumaranai mono desu ga..
つまらないものですが..
I'm sorry this is only a small worthless thing..

If the gift is an edible item, then one might say:

Okuchi ni aimasen deshoo ga..
お口に合いませんでしょうが..
This may not suit your taste.

Okuchi ni au ka doo ka wakarimasen ga..

Modesty (kenson)

お口に合うかどうか分かりませんが..
I'm not sure whether this will suit your taste..

Having prepared a grand feast, one's host will still say:

Nani mo arimasen ga..
なにもありませんが..
There is nothing much to eat, but..

On bidding farewell, the host will most likely apologize for being a poor host.

Nani mo okamae dekimasen de..
何もお構いできませんで..
I'm sorry, I didn't entertain you much.

To the Japanese, modesty is a virtue. One does not boast about oneself or one's family to others. Quite the contrary, most statements are self depreciating. The following short conversations illustrate the manner of speech used.

- Tanaka : John san, kono goro Nihongo ga honto ni
ojoozu ni narimashita ne.
田中 : ジョンさん、このごろ日本語が本当に
お上手になりましたね。
John, your Japanese has become very good
these days, hasn't it?
John : Iie, tonde mo nai. Tanaka san no Eigo
ni wa ashimoto ni mo oyobimasen yo.
ジョン : いいえ、とんでもない。田中さんの
英語には足元にも及びませんよ。
Not at all. I cannot compare at all with your
English

ジョン : hi desu ne. Tanaka san no okusan wa
okoto no keiko desu ka.
いいですね。田中さんの奥さんは
お琴のおけいこですか。
That's beautiful. Is that your wife practicing
on the koto?

田中 Heta no yoko suki desu yo.
下手の横好きですよ。
She's quite poor at it but she's very keen on it.

ジョン Tanaka san senjitsu no gorufu compe de wa
yuushoo shita soo desu ne.
田中さん先日のゴルフコンペでは
優勝したそうですね。
Mr Tanaka, I heard that you won the golf
competition championship the other day.

田中 Iya, Tada no magure desu yo.
いや。ただのまぐれですよ。
No, It was just a fluke.

ジョン Nichiyoo daiku desu ka. Yasumi no hi de mo
yoku hatarakimasu ne.
日曜大工ですか。休みの日でも
よく働きますね。
You're pattering around the house. You work
so hard even on Sunday.

田中 Bimbooshoo nan desu yo.
貧乏性なんですよ。
I just don't know how to relax.
(lit. I'm just unlucky by nature).

ジョン : Rippa na osumai desu ne.
立派なお住まいですね。
What a fine house this is.

田中 : Tonde mo nai.
Jon san no okuni ni kurabereba,
konna uchi usagi koya deshoo.
とんでもない。
ジョンさんのお国に比べれば、
こんなうちうさぎ小屋でしょう。
Not at all.
Compared to houses in your country,
this might just be a rabbit hutch.

We began in Chapter 1 by looking at humbleness by the avoidance of using I. This Chapter on modesty brings us full circle and concludes our current tour of the Japanese language. We hope that you have gained some new insights into the language.

Index

- Achiki*, 9
- Aiutaga*, 72
- Aidoru*, 55
- Aisatsu*, 16-20
- A-i-u-e-o*, 49
- A-ka-sa*, 48
- Anata*, 12, 15
- Animal sounds, 68, 69
- Animation, Japanese, 55
- Anime*, 55
- Ara*, 34
- Are*, 34
- Arigatoo*, 39
- Arubaito*, 58
- Atashi*, 9

- Bakanga*, 53
- Baka*, 42, 44
- Boku*, 66, 67
- Boku*, 10, 14, 43
- Bonus, 58
- Boonasu*, 58
- Borrowed words, 52-56
 - office environment, 57-59
- Buffet, 53
- Bura bura*, 70
- Buu buu*, 68
- Buzz off, 41, 45

- Calligraphy, *iroha poem*, 62
- Card, games,
 - Hanafuda*, 73
 - Irohaguruta*, 74
- Cash register, 56
- Cat, I am a, 10
- Carbon, 45
- Characters,
 - Book, 63, 64
 - Chinese, 63-67
 - convex, protrusion, 66, 67
 - Han, 63
 - hollow, depression, 66, 67
 - pictorial representation, 65
 - radical index, 65
 - reading, 63, 64
 - strength, 66
 - stroke order, 66
 - tree, 66
- China, 75
- Chinese, 28, 63, 74
 - characters, 63-67
 - reading, 63
- Chaki*, 76
- Chotto*, 24, 36
- Coming of age, 31
- Counter, 29
 - age, 31
 - animals, 30
 - birds, 30
 - books, 30
 - buildings, 30
 - days, 30
 - houses, 30
 - months, 30
 - numbers, 32
 - people, 30

rabbits, 30
 round, thin objects, 30
 small objects, 30
 thin, flat objects, 30
 Counting, 28-33
 system, 32
 Daarin, 15
 Daigakusei, 9, 13
 Dakara, 40
 Damn, 44, 45
 Dan dan, 69
 Dare, 21-27
 Darling, 15
 Days of the month, 29
 Deko, 66, 67
 Dewa, 19
 Diacritic mark, 47
 Dictionary,
 electronic, 66
 form, of verb, 49
 Japanese, 48, 65
 Discount, 59
 Disrespect, 45
 Dochira, 24
 Doko, 21-27
 Domo, 38, 39
 Donata, 24
 Don don, 70
 Duo, 21-27
 Dooshite, 22
 Double consonant, 47
 Dream home, 54
 Ee, 34
 Eiga, 55
 Entertainment, words related, 54
 Eriito, 56
 Eichi, 45, 55, 56
 Euphonic change, 30, 31, 46, 47,

51, 72
 Exclamations, 34
 Expressions, 34-39
 disbelief, 35
 during meals, 38
 gaining attention, 36
 leaving, 38
 opinion, 35
 sorry, 38, 39, 42, 43
 surprise, 34
 thank you, 38, 39
 visiting, 37
 Farewell, 81
 Fifty sounds, 46
 Fight, starting a, 40-42
 Five levels, 49
 Fool, 42, 44, 45
 Foreign words, 52-56
 Forgive, 42, 43
 Four letter words, 44-45
 Futari, 31
 Gairaigo, 52-56
 afisu no gairaigo, 57-59
 Gambaite, 39
 Games, see Geemu
 -gata, 15
 Gatsu, 30
 Geemu, 73-76
 go, igo, 75
 hanafuda, 73, 74
 irohagaruta, 74
 jankenpon, 76
 maajan, 74
 Geisha, 9, 10
 Genki, 16, 20, 52-56
 Gin-bura, 70
 Giseigo, 68-72
 Gitaigo, 68-72

Go, 75
 gote, 75
 Kawabata, Yasunari, 76
 sente, 75
 Gochisoosama, 37
 Godan, 49
 Gojuuon, 46
 Gomen, 37, 38, 42
 Gote, 75
 Greetings, 16-20
 at home, 20
 between colleagues, 19
 good day, 17
 good morning, 17, 18
 good night, 19
 on meeting, 17
 on parting, 18, 19, 20
 on returning, 20
 Guu, 76
 Guu guu, 70
 Hajimemashite, 8
 Hanafuda, 73, 74
 Harachi, 31
 Hatsuka, 31
 Hayakuchi koroba, 77-79
 kisha, 78
 mo, 78
 niwa, 77
 Health, 16, 17
 Hee, 34
 Hentai, see Eichi
 Hiki, 30
 Hiragana, 46, 60, 64
 Hito, 24, 42
 Hitori, 31
 Homonyms, 32, 78
 Hon, 30, 64
 Honorific 'o', 13, 15
 Honto, 34, 35

Horu, 36
 Hottote, 41
 How, 21-27
 Humbleness, 7, 8, 13, 80, 83
 Hyoogen, 34-39
 Hyuu hyuu, 71
 I, 7-11
 Idiot, 44, 45
 Idol, pop, 55
 Igo, see Go
 Ikagen, 40, 41
 Ikaga, 23
 Ikimasu, 13, 24
 Ikura, 23
 Inflections, verb, 49-51, 64
 Interrogative words, 21-27
 how, 23
 what, 21, 22
 when, 23
 where, 23
 who, 24
 why, 22
 with ka, 24, 25
 with mo, 26-27
 Intimacy, 13, 14
 Irasshaimasu, 13
 I-ro-ka, 60-62, 74
 Irohagaruta, 74
 Irohazuka, 61
 Irregular verbs, 49
 Itadakimasu, 37, 38
 Iisu, 21-27
 Ite, 20
 Jaa, 18
 Jankenpon, 76
 Jiri jiri, 71
 Joodan, 41
 Josuushi, 29

Ka, 24, 25, 30
Kachoo, 13
Kampai, 38
Kana, 46-51, 60
Kanojo, 14
Kanji, 63-67
 dictionary lookup, 65
 formation, 66
 pictorial representation, 65
 radical index, 65
 stroke order, 66
Karaoke, 58
Kare, 14
Karuta, 74
Kata, 24, 60
Katakana, 32, 48, 49, 52-56, 64
Kazokata, 28-33
Ken, 30
Kenkago, 40-43
Kenyon, 80-83
Ki, 19
Kikoku, 23
Kimi, 14, 45
Kisha, 78
Ko, 30
Kodomo, 11, 22
Konnichi, 17
Koohii, 9, 14, 53
Kore, 21, 36
Ku, 32
Kun-yomi, 64
Kura kura, 71

Maa, 34
Mai, 29, 30
Mai hoomu, 54
Mairimasu, 20
Mukudonarudo, 53
Man, 32

Manner of doing, *onomatopoeia*,
 69, 70
Masaka, 35
-masu, 50
McDonalds, 53
Mo, 26, 27, 78
Modesty, 80-83
Moo, 41, 43
Mooning setto, 53
Mooshimasu, 8
Moshi, 36

-nai, 35, 49, 50, 81
Nan, 21, 22
Nani, 14, 21-27, 81
Nare, 42
Naruhodo, 35, 36
Natsume, Soseki, 10
Naze, 21-27
Nee, 36
Negative verb, 26, 35, 49
Nichi, 30, 31
Nin, 30
Niwa, 31, 77
Noro nora, 70
Numbers, 28, 32
 puns with, 32
 unlucky, 32

Office Lady, 57
Ofisu no gairaigo, 57-59
O-genki, 17, 20
O-hayoo, 17, 18
Oi, 36
O-kaeri, 20
O-kuchi, 37, 80
OL, 57
O-mae, 14, 45
Omikoshi, 36, 37
Onomatopoeia, 68-72

animal sounds, 68, 69
 manner of doing, 69
 weather conditions, 71
On-yomi, 63
Ooeru, 57
Ore, 10
O-saki, 19
O-shigoto, 8
O-taku, 15
O-toosan, 13
O-tsukuresuma, 19
Oya, 34, 35
O-yasumi, 19

Paa, 76
Paper, 76
Pan, 52
Para para, 72
Parting, 18, 19, 81
Part-time work, 58, 59
Pasokon, 58
Patching up, 42-43
Peko peko, 71
Phonetic change, 74
Pictorial representation, 65
Plural ending, -tachi, 15
Poem, iroha, 60-62
Pun with numbers, 32

Quarrelsome, words, 40-43

Rabbit hutch, 83
Radical, of character, 65
Reading,
 Chinese, 63
 Japanese, 64
Reji, 56

Saabisu, 59
Sal, 31

Saido bijinesu, 59
Sakki, 42
Salary man, 57
Sandoichi, 14
Sarariman, 57
Satsu, 30
Sayonara, 18
Scissors, 76
Sensei, 13
Sente, 75
Service, 59
Shamisen, 10
Shi, 32
Shiba shiba, 69
Shinjirarenai, 35
Shitsukoi, 41
Shitsurei, 19, 38
Shrine, portable, 36
Smorgasbord, 53
Sochira, 15
Soku-on, 47
Soo, 35
Sorosoro, 19, 38
Sorry, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45
Soyo soyo, 71
Stone, 75, 76
Strike, 59
Suffering, 32
Surprise, exclamations of, 34, 35
Suto, 59
Syllables, Japanese, 46-51, 60, 61

-tachi, 15
Tadaina, 20
-tai, 50
Territory, 75
Thank you, 38, 39
Tone, 34
 of voice, 22
Tongue twister, 31, 77-79

Too, 30
Toranpu, 73
Tsuitachi, 31
Tsumaranai, 37, 80

Uchi, 11
Usagi koya, 83
Uso, 34

Verbs
dictionary form, 49
imperative, 50
inflections, 49-51, 64
negation, 26, 35, 49
polite form, 50
volition, 51
wish, desire, 50

Wa, 30, 31, 77
Waapuro, 58
Wagahai, 10
Wan wan, 68, 69
Ware, 11
Warui kotoba, 44-45
Washoi, 36, 37
Watakushi, 7-11
Watashi, 9, 43
Weather conditions, 64, 71
What, 21-27
When, 21-27
Where, 21-27
Who, 21-27
Why, 21-27

Yool don, 36
Yaroo, 44, 45
You, 12-15

Zamaa, 42

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